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Mr Michael Denieffe
Managing Editor
Independent Newspapers (Ireland) Ltd.
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Monday, 2nd April 2012

Dear Michael,

I am writing to you in relation to yesterday's edition of the Sunday Independent, regarding Denis O'Brien.

You will recall that in June 2010, I sought a meeting with you to discuss the bias against Mr O'Brien. Following this meeting (attended by Declan Carlyle, Deputy Managing Director, IN(I)L, and Rhona Blake, Managing Director, Fleishman Hillard), you responded by letter stating: "I wish to reiterate the point made by us at the meeting that it is our case that there is no basis whatsoever in the suggestion that there is an editorial bias or agenda aimed at Mr Denis O'Brien." (Copy enclosed). I did not accept your explanation and I replied with a letter (also enclosed).

Since then the agenda-driven journalism has continued unabated. Indeed it has been significantly intensified in recent weeks, culminating in yesterday's edition. In my experience the coverage relating to Denis O'Brien yesterday ranks as one of the most concerted and biased campaigns ever waged against any individual in this country. The great editors you and I worked alongside including Aiden Pender, Vinnie Doyle, Michael Hand and Niall Hanley and the senior management including, Bartle Pitcher, Liam Healy, Joe Hayes and Joe McGrane, would never have allowed such a sinister campaign be waged against one person – irrespective of pressure from "on high".

Yesterday, news was merged with comment in 15 contributions (list enclosed) to produce a cocktail designed solely to discredit Denis O'Brien. It was as calculating as it was contrived. It prompted one of your colleagues to send me a message last night stating: "I am ashamed to be an Indo employee."

But probably the most interesting insight into the standards at the Sunday Independent was the deliberate decision of the Editor and senior editorial executives not to offer Denis O'Brien an opportunity to respond to any of the endless negative references to him.

For the record, not one request for a response emanated from the Sunday Independent to enable Mr O'Brien to give his side of the story or defend himself.

What standards or ethics permit such behavior? Where was balance – a cornerstone of professionalism in journalism – in yesterday's coverage? It was absent because that was what was decided. What we witnessed yesterday was pernicious journalism at its worst. And it happened because you, as Managing Editor, allowed it to happen, yesterday and before.

Do you still expect us to believe that "there is no basis whatsoever in the suggestion that there is an adversarial bias or agenda aimed at Mr Denis O'Brien" after all the coverage since our meeting in 2010? I would remind you that coverage since then also included results from one of the infamous Sunday Independent phone polls whose covert compilation and dubious provenance is derided by most of your own journalistic staff.

Michael, it is patently obvious that you and your senior management colleagues at Independent Newspapers (Ireland) have abdicated all responsibility for journalistic standards and ethics at the Sunday Independent, in relation to Denis O'Brien. This is unprofessional and unacceptable conduct.

The only conclusion one can come to is that you and your management colleagues believe that the wishes and willful interference of one shareholder must be slavishly supported.

For the record, I am sending a copy of this correspondence to James Osborne, Chairman, Independent News & Media plc, to bring this matter to his attention.

Yours,


James Morrissey

2.14.2012

cc

Mr James Osborne, Chairman, Independent News & Media plc

Mr Joe Webb, Chief Executive, Independent Newspapers (Ireland) Ltd.

Sunday Independent Media Coverage

1st April 2012

Headline – This is not a day to celebrate, says Kenny

Author – John Drennan and Ronald Quinlan

Page – 2

Headline – Powder-puff TDs need to follow Burton's good example

Author – Eilis O'Hanlon

Page – 36

Headline – There's Big Phil – in the middle of things, again

Author – Brendan O'Connor

Page – 26

Headline – Fine Gael must stop its blustering on Denis O'Brien

Author – Eoghan Harris

Page – 25

Headline – O'Brien's link to Fine Gael spell more trouble for the Taoiseach

Author – Maeve Sheehan

Page – 24

Headline – FG rode the back of O'Brien tiger – but now it must roar

Author – John-Paul McCarthy

Page – 28

Headline – Please don't stand so close to me

Author – Anne Harris

Page – 26

Headline – Coalition splits over O'Brien media plan

Author – John Drennan

Page – 1 (including mast head)

Headline – Motorola warned of job cuts over licence

Author – Sam Smyth

Page – 4

Headline – No further challenges to tribunal by O'Brien

Author – Tom Lyons

Page – 4

Headline – Publication of Mahon Report brings out leader in Martin

Author – Celia Larkin

Page – 28

Headline – A tribe adept at dipping into the pockets of industry

Author – Jody Corcoran

Page – 27

Headline – Investors' loss in faith in us is bad for business here

Author – Elaine Byrne

Page – 24

Headline – Good news from bad Anglo

Author – Shane Ross

Page – 8

Headline – Ministers simply cannot bank of yes vote

Author – Eilis O'Hanlon

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